



MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: L. Kimball Payne III, City Manager
Bruce **McNabb**, P.E., Director of Public Works
Timothy Mitchell, P.E., Acting Director of Utilities

DATE: January 16, 2002

SUBJECT: **A Resolution Relating to Water Supply and Water Quality Needs in the James River Basin**

The James River Basin Association seeks approval of the attached resolution to support a study of the James River basin by the Army Corps of Engineers. In October of 2001, the Commonwealth of Virginia made a formal written request asking the Corps to undertake the study. The Corps' **Norfolk** District is firmly behind the study, but needs a federal appropriation of \$200,000 to initiate it. Strong state and local support will be needed to secure this **funding** in the Corps' **FY03** budget.

Background: The 1999 drought caused low flows which impacted the water supplies of over 100 cities or communities in Virginia. Historically, droughts of this magnitude have recurred every 20 to 30 years, and have severely impacted water quality in the basin. Major floods recur even more **frequently** and also severely impact water quality. Additionally, these floods cause significant damage to communities and industries in the basin. As a result, a comprehensive study of the James River basin is needed. (A copy of a schematic map of the basin is attached).

Study Summary: The Corps of Engineers is proposing to initiate a comprehensive study of the James River Basin. The initial phase of this study would be a reconnaissance study, which will **identify** specific problems and potential solutions that warrant **further** study. The second phase would then address the feasibility of the solutions identified in the initial phase. Depending upon the results of the study, immediate actions may involve revisiting the Corps of Engineers' Operational Plan for Gathright Dam in the basin's headwaters to achieve the most desirable operational levels and releases to augment low flows. Releases from the **Gathright** Dam account for over one-third of the low flow in the River Basin. Long range plans may include a new storage facility which, along with other benefits, would also be used to augment low flows throughout the basin in times of drought.

City Staff has met with representatives of the James River Basin Association and has discussed this proposed study in detail. (Attached is a letter and fact sheet from the James River Basin Association dated November **30, 2001**). The impact of droughts and floods on the City's water supply and industry is such that we think that this study is definitely warranted and seek

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Council's support of the study as well by approval of this resolution.

Attach: 3

cc: Terre11 J. Reid, President, James River Basin Association

A RESOLUTION RELATING TO WATER SUPPLY AND WATER QUALITY NEEDS IN THE JAMES RIVER BASIN

WHEREAS, the James River system is a precious natural resource serving the water-related needs of 3.5 million Virginians in the James River basin, including the citizens of Lynchburg.

WHEREAS, there is a history of recurring droughts resulting in low flow conditions in the James River basin, which encompasses approximately 11,000 square miles or 25 percent of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

WHEREAS, the recent drought of 1999 caused stream flows to drop to critical levels in many communities within the James River basin, and dry conditions since that time have remained a significant concern for citizens who live, work and recreate within the basin.

WHEREAS, immediate and long-range actions are necessary to meet water supply needs throughout the basin in times of future droughts.

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth of Virginia has requested the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to undertake a comprehensive water resources investigation for the James River basin addressing, among other issues, water supply and quality, low flow augmentation, and flood control.

WHEREAS, the water resources investigation requested by the Commonwealth is a prudent measure in furtherance of sound planning and management of the James River system.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED That the Lynchburg City Council urges the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to proceed with such a study as soon as possible in consultation with appropriate Lynchburg officials.

Adopted:

Certified: _____
Clerk of Council

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JAMES RIVER BASIN ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 877, Lynchburg, VA 245050877
Phone: (434)947-1901, FAX: (434)947-1659

November 30, 2001

Dear JRBA Member:

Our annual meeting at Gathright Dam in October was a successful kick-off for our efforts to secure a comprehensive study of the James River basin by the Corps of Engineers. Now is the time to roll up our sleeves and do some heavy lifting to make this study become a reality.

The Corps' Norfolk District is firmly behind the study, but needs a federal appropriation (\$200,000) to initiate it. Strong state and local support will be necessary to secure this funding in Corps' FY03 budget.

In October, the Commonwealth of Virginia made a formal written request asking the Corps to undertake the study. In this request, the Secretary of Natural Resources warned that "the 1999 drought, which is still affecting water supplies in many communities, put us all on notice of the potential for severe adverse impacts of future droughts."

The state's endorsement was a significant step. Now is the time for JRBA members to confirm their support and, in a coordinated manner, convey that support to the incoming Warner administration and to Congress.

The need to show broad support for the study is underscored by the existence of some opposition to conducting even a study. On November 5, Tim Morse (Westvaco) and I attended a public meeting at VMI sponsored by the Corps to obtain input from the "Upper James River" community. Congressman Goodlatte, Colonel David L. Hanson (the new District Engineer of Norfolk District), and a number of other invitees including the James River Association representatives attended. The general tone of the comments by the participants was less than enthusiastic and, consequently, Congressman Goodlatte expressed some concerns. In addition, recent articles in the *Richmond Times Dispatch*, *Ronnoke Times*, and *Lynchburg News*, while not completely negative, quoted a few persons who incorrectly described the purpose of the study as an attempt by the citizens of the eastern part of the state to steal water from those in the west.

We, along with the Commonwealth and the Corps, are confident in the need for the study. We believe that through a coordinated effort we can persuade our congressional delegation that this is a meritorious study worthy of federal funding.

Our first priority is to obtain solid support for the study by having our local government members adopt resolutions to that effect. To facilitate this process, we have drafted the attached Model Resolution and Fact Sheet for each of you to use to begin the process with your board or

council. Time is short before the FY03 federal budget process begins. We need to get this done by early February if at all possible.

In the near future, we will also call on JRBA's industry members to write to key officials in support of the study. Obviously, that component will need to be coordinated with the overall effort. For the time being, however, our primary focus is securing the necessary local government resolutions within the next month or two.

Once we have obtained a sufficient number of resolutions, our next step will be to determine how best to approach the incoming Warner administration and state and congressional delegations to gain their support. To do this in an organized and effective way, it may be advisable to pool our resources for some outside assistance. I will try to arrange a meeting soon to discuss this and to develop a plan to proceed.

Keep me informed of your progress and, if you need assistance with briefing your board or council, please call me at (434) 947- 1901.

Thanks,

Terrell J. Reid
President

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Attachments:

- (1) Model Resolution
- (2) Fact Sheet

FACT SHEET

JAMES RIVER BASIN ASSOCIATION'S SUPPORT FOR A STUDY OF THE JAMES RIVER BASIN BY THE CORPS OF ENGINEERS

- The JRBA was organized in 1958 to promote the wise use and conservation of the natural resources in the James River basin. Specific accomplishments include our role in supporting projects and proposals such as:
 - Gathright Dam and Lake Moomaw in Covington
 - James R. Olin Flood Protection Project in Buena Vista
 - The Richmond Floodwall in our capital city's downtown area
- The 1999 drought caused low flows (still continuing) impacting water supplies in over 100 cities or communities in Virginia.
- Releases from Gathright Dam accounted for over one-third of low flow in the river basin during these low flow conditions.
- Droughts of this magnitude reoccur every 20 to 30 years severely impacting water quality in the basin.
- Major floods on the James River that reoccur more frequently severely impact water quality and cause significant damage to communities and industries in the basin.
- Immediate and long-range plans are required to mitigate adverse impacts on water quality and water supply.
- Depending on the results of the study process, immediate actions may entail revisiting the Corps of Engineers' Operation Plan for Gathright Dam in the basin's headwaters to address desirable operational levels and releases to augment low flows.
- Depending on the results of the study process, long-range plans may include a new storage facility, which, among other benefits, would augment low flows throughout the basin during times of drought.
- The Corps of Engineers is proposing to initiate a comprehensive study of the James River basin. The first phase would be a reconnaissance study (FY03) to identify specific problems and potential solutions warranting further study. A second phase (FY04 - FY07) would address the feasibility of the solutions identified in the reconnaissance phase.
- The JRBA supports a comprehensive study by the Corps of Engineers in furtherance of informed planning and management in the James River basin.

JAMES RIVER BASIN

